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CAXTON'S PREFACES.

WILLIAM CAXTON.

1412 (?)–1491 (?).

THE dates assigned for Caxton's birth vary from 1412 to 1422. We know from his own statement that he was born in "the Weald of Kent." He seems to have been the son of a farmer. In 1439 he was apprenticed to a wealthy London mercer. At the death of the latter, in 1841, Caxton went to Bruges, apparently as the traveling agent or factor of the Company of Mercers of London. In 1462 or 1463 he seems to have become governor of a chartered association of English adventurers trading to foreign parts. On the marriage of Edward IV.'s sister, Margaret, to Charles, Duke of Burgundy, in 1468 or a little later, Caxton entered the service of the Duchess, probably as her business agent. Bruges, then the Duke's capital, was a center of literary as well as commercial activity. Book-collecting and book-making were then highly in fashion at the Duke's court, and Caxton, who seems to have caught the contagion, began by translating into English a worthless version of the history of Troy, written by a royal chaplain, one Le Fevre. Meantime Caxton seems to have learned the art of printing from one Colard Mansion, then a well-known printer of Bruges. Accordingly, Caxton put through the press in 1474 *the first book printed in the English language* under the title "The Recuyell of the Histories of Troye." Caxton seems to have printed several other books during his residence in Bruges, notably his "Game and Play of the Chesse." There has been much dispute as to the exact date of his return to England and of his first printing there, but we have his own statement that his book "The Dictes and Sayinges of Philosophies" was printed in England in 1477; for upon the title page of this book we read: "Emprynted

by me William Caxton, at Westminster, the yere of our Lord MCCCCLXXVII." His press seems to have been situated "at the sign of the Red Pale in the Almonry at Westminster." At least, it was somewhere beneath the roof of the great abbey that the first book was printed in England. Caxton printed at least sixty-four books, of which thirty-eight survive in whole or in part. Many of these books were translations made by Caxton himself. His own compositions are confined mostly to prefaces and introductions. He died about 1491. The most prominent traits of Caxton's character as apparent in his writings are :—(1) frank simplicity, often taking the form of a personal confession to his reader; (2) fervent piety and faith in God; (3) a high sense of honor in both literary and economical affairs; (4) grave, sly humor.

Extracts from Caxton's Prefaces.

When I remember that every man is bounden by the commandment and counsel of the wise man to eschew sloth and idleness, which is mother and nurse of vices, and ought to put myself unto virtuous occupation and business, then I, having no great charge or occupation, following the said counsel, took a French book and read therein many strange marvellous histories, wherein I had great pleasure and delight, as well for the novelty of the same, as for the fair language of the French, which was in prose so well and compendiously set and written, methought I understood the sentence and substance of every matter. And for so much as this book was new and late made and drawn into French, and never had seen it in our English tongue, I thought in myself it should be a good business to translate it into our English, to the end that it might be had as well in the royaume of England as in other lands, and also for to pass therewith the time, and thus concluded in myself to begin this said work, and forthwith took pen and ink and began boldly to run forth, as blind Bayard, in this present work. . . . When all these things [his "simpleness and unperfectness" in the French and English languages] came before me after that I had made and written five or six quires, I fell in despair of this work and purposed no more to have continued therein, and the quires laid apart; and in two years after laboured no more at this work, and was fully in will to have left it. Till on a time it fortuned that the right high, excellent, and right virtuous princess, my right redoubted lady, my lady Margaret, . . . sent for me to speak with her good grace of divers matters, among the which I let her highness have knowledge of the aforesaid beginning of this work; which anon commanded me to show the said five or six quires to her said grace. And when she had seen them, anon she

found defaute [fault] in the English, which she commanded me to amend, and moreover commanded me straightly to continue and make an end of the residue then not translated. Whose dreadful commandment I durst in no wise disobey, because I am a servant unto her said grace, and receive of her yearly fee, and many other good and great benefits, and also hope many more to receive of her highness; but forthwith went and laboured in the said translation after my simple and poor cunning, all so nigh as I can following mine author, meekly beseeching the bounteous highness of my said lady, that of her benevolence list to accept and take in gree [take kindly] this simple and rude work. . . . And forasmuch as I suppose the said two books be not had before this time in our English language, therefore I had the better will to accomplish the said work; which work was begun in Bruges and continued in Gaunt [Ghent], and finished in Cologne, in time of the troublous world, and of the great divisions being and reigning as well in the royaumes of England and France as in all other places universally through the world, that is to wit, the year of our Lord one thousand four hundred and seventy-one. . . . Because that I have now good leisure, being in Cologne, and having none other thing to do at this time in eschewing of idleness, mother of all vices, I have deliberated in myself of the contemplation of my said redoubted lady, to take this labor in hand. . . . Thus end I this [the third] book, which I have translated after mine author, as nigh as God hath given me cunning, to whom be given laud and praises. An for as much as in the writing of the same my pen is worn, mine hand weary and not stedfast, mine eyen dimmed with overmuch looking on the white paper, and my courage not so prone and ready to labour as it hath been, and that age creepeth on me daily and feebleth all the body; and also because I have promised to divers gentlemen and to my friends to address them as hastily as I might this said book, therefore I have practiced and learned at my great charge and dispense [expense], to ordain this said book in print, after the manner and form as you may here see; and is not written with pen

and ink as other books are, to the end that every man may have them at once. For all the books of this story, named the "Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye," thus imprinted as ye here see, were begun in one day, and also finished in one day. Which book I presented to my said redoubted lady as afore is said, and she hath well accepted it and largely rewarded me. —*To the Recuyell.*

I have emprised and concluded in myself to reduce this said book into our English, as all along and plainly ye may read, hear, and see in this book here following. Beseeching all them that find fault in the same to correct and amend it, and also to pardon me of the rude and simple reducing. And though there be no gay terms, nor subtle, nor new eloquence, yet I hope that it shall be understood, and to that intent I have specially reduced it after the simple cunning that God hath lent me, whereof I humbly and with all my heart thank Him, and also am bounden to pray for my father's and mother's souls, that in my youth set me to school, by which, by the sufferance of God, I get my living I hope truly. And that I may do so and continue, I beseech Him to grant me of his grace; and so to labor and occupy myself virtuously, that I may come out of debt and deadly sin, that after this life I may come to His bliss in heaven.—*To the Life of Charles the Great*, 1485.

Unto the noble, ancient, and renowned city, the city of London in England, I, William Caxton, citizen and conjury [sworn fellow] of the same and of the fraternity and fellowship of the Mercery, owe of right my service and good will; and of very duty am bounden naturally to assist, aid, and counsel, as farforth as I can to my power, as to my mother of whom I have received my nurture and living; and shall pray for the good prosperity and policy of the same during my life. For as me seemeth it is of great need, by cause I have known it in my young age much more wealthy, prosperous, and richer than it is at this day; and the cause is that there is almost

none that intendeth to the common weal, but only every man for his singular profit.—*To the Book called "Cathon,"* 1483.

Some gentlemen late blamed me, saying that in my translations I had over-curious terms which could not be understood of common people, and desired me to use old and homely terms in my translations. And fain would I satisfy every man; and so to do, took an old book and read therein; and certainly the English was so rude and broad that I could not well understand it. And also my Lord Abbot of Westminster did show to me late certain evidences written in old English, for to reduce it into our English now used, and certainly it was written in such wise that it was more like to Dutch than English; I could not reduce nor bring it to be understood. And certainly our language now used varieth far from that which was used and spoken when I was born: for we Englishmen be born under the denomination of the moon, which is never steadfast, but ever wavering, waxing one season, and waneth and decreaseth another season; and that common English that is spoken in one shire varieth from another. Insomuch that in my days happened that certain merchants were in a ship in Thames for to have sailed over the sea into Zealand, and for lack of wind they tarried at Foreland, and went to land for to refresh them; and one of them named Sheffelde, a mercer, came into an house and asked for meat, and especially he asked for *eggs;* and the good wife answered that she could speak no French; and the merchant was angry, for he also could speak no French, but would have had eggs; but she understood him not. And then at last another said that he would have *eyren;* then the good wife said that she understood him well. Lo, what should a man in these days now write, *eggs* or *eyren?* Certainly it is hard to please every man, by cause of diversity and change of language. For in these days every man that is in any reputation in his country will utter his communication and matters in such manners and terms that few men shall understand them. And some honest and good clerks [scholars] have been with me, and desired me

to write the most curious terms that I could find. And thus between plain, rude, and curious, I stand abashed; but in my judgment the common terms that be daily used be lighter [easier] to be understood than the old and ancient English.—*To a Book Printed in* 1490.

Great thanks, laud, and honour ought to be given to the clerks, poets, and historiographs that have written many noble books of wisdom of the lives, passions, and miracles of holy saints, of histories of noble and famous acts and faits [deeds], and of the chronicles sith the beginning of the creation of the world unto this present time; by which we are daily informed and have knowledge of many things, of whom we should not have known if they had not left to us their monuments written. Amongst whom, and in especial before all other, we ought to gave a singular laud unto that noble and great philosopher, Geoffrey Chaucer, the which, for his ornate writing in our tongue, may weil have the name of a laureat poet. For before that he, by his labour, embellished, ornated, and made fair our English, in this royaume [kingdom] was had rude speech and incongrue [incongruous], as yet it appeareth by old books, which at this day ought not to have place nor be compared among, nor to his beauteous volumes and ornate writings, of whom he made many books and treatises of many a noble history, as well in metre as in rhyme and prose; and them so craftily made, that he comprehended his matters in short, quick, and high sentences; eschewing prolixity, casting away the chaff of superfluity, and shewing the picked grain of sentence, uttered by crafty and sugared eloquence. . . . Of which book ["The Canterbury Tales"] so incorrect was one brought to me six years passed, which I supposed had been very true and correct, and according to the same I did imprint a certain number of them, which anon were sold to many and divers gentlemen: of whom one gentleman came to me and said that this book was not according in many places unto the book that Geoffrey Chaucer had made. To whom I answered that I had made it according to my copy, and by me was nothing added

nor diminished. Then he said he knew a book which his father had and much loved, that was very true and according unto his own first book by him made; and said more, if I would imprint it again he would get me the same book for a copy. How be it, he wist well his father would not gladly part from it; to whom I said in case he could get me such a book true and correct, that I would once endeavor me to imprint it again, for to satisfy the author: whereas before by ignorance I erred in hurting and defaming his book in divers places, in setting in some things that he never said nor made, and leaving out many things that he made which are requisite to be set in. And thus we fell at accord; and he full gently got me of his father the said book, and delivered it to me, by which I have corrected my book.—*To his Second Edition of the Canterbury Tales.*

Which work [Chaucer's "Book of Fame"] as me seemeth, is craftily made, and worthy to be written and known: for he toucheth in it right great wisdom and subtle understanding; and so in all his works he excelleth, in mine opinion, all other writers in our English; for he writeth no void words, but all his matter is full of high and quick sentence, to whom ought to be given laud and praising for his noble making and writing. For of him all other have borrowed sith, and taken in all their well saying and writing.—*To Chaucer's Book of Fame.*

Oh, ye knights of England, where is the custom and usage of noble chivalry that was used in those days? What do ye now but go to the baynes [baths] and play at dice? And some, not well advised, use not honest and good rule against all order of knighthood. Leave this, leave it! and read the noble volumes of St. Graal of Lancelot, of Galaad, of Trystram, of Perse Forest, of Percyval, of Gawayn, and many more: there shall ye see manhood, courtesy, and gentleness. And look in latter days of the noble acts sith the Conquest, as in King Richard days, Cœur de Lion, Edward I. and III.

and his noble sons, Sir Robert Knolles, Sir John Hawkwood, Sir John Chandos, Sir Gueltiare Manny. Read Froissart; and also behold that victorious and noble King Harry V., and the captains under him, his noble brethren, the earls of Salisbury, Montague, and many other, whose names shine gloriously by their virtuous noblesse and acts that they did in the honour of the order of chivalry. Alas, what do ye but sleep and take ease, and are all disordered from chivalry?

* * * * * *

How many knights be there now in England that have the use and exercise of a knight? that is to wit, that he knoweth his horse and his horse him; that is to say, he being ready at a point to have all thing that belongeth to a knight, an horse that is according and broken after his hand, his armour and harness suit, and so forth, *et cetera*. I suppose, an a due search should be made, there should be many founden that lack: the more pity is! I would it pleased our sovereign Lord that twice or thrice a year, or at the least once, he would cry jousts of peace, to the end that every knight should have horse and harness, and also the use and craft of a knight, and also to tourney one against one, or two against two; and the best to have a prize, a diamond or jewel, such as should please the prince. This should cause gentlemen to resort to the ancient customs of chivalry to great fame and renown: and also to be alway ready to serve their prince when he shall call them or have need.—*To the Book of the Order of Chivalry.*

At such a time as he [Lord Rivers] had accomplished this said work, it liked him to send it to me in certain quires to oversee. . . . And so afterward I came unto my said lord, and told him how I had read and seen his book, and that he had done a meritorious deed in the labour of the translation thereof. . . . Then my said lord desired me to oversee it, and where as I should find fault to correct it, wherein I answered unto his lordship that I could not amend it. . . . Notwithstanding he willed me to oversee it. . . . I find that my said

lord hath left out certain and divers conclusions touching women. Whereof I marvelled that my said lord hath not writ on them, nor what hath moved him so to do, nor what cause he had at that time. But I suppose that some fair lady hath desired him to leave it out of his book; or else he was amorous on some noble lady, for whose love he would not set it in his book; or else for the very affection, love, and good will that he hath unto all ladies and gentlewomen, he thought that Socrates spared the sooth, and wrote of women more than truth; which I cannot think that so true a man and so noble a philosopher as Socrates was, should write otherwise than truth. For if he had made fault in writing of women, he ought not or should not be believed in his other Dictes and Sayings. But I perceive that my said lord knoweth verily that such defaults be not had nor found in the women born and dwelling in these parts nor regions of the world. Socrates was a Greek, born in a far country from hence, which country is all of other conditions than this is, and men and women of other nature that they be here in this country; for I wot well, of whatsoever condition women be in Greece, the women of this country be right good, wise, pleasant, humble, discreet, sober, chaste, obedient to their husbands, true, secret, stedfast, ever busy, and never idle, attemperate in speaking, and virtuous in all their works; or at least should be so. For which causes so evident, my said lord, as I suppose, thought it not of necessity to set in his book the sayings of his author Socrates touching women.—*To the Dictes and Sayings of Philosophers.*

I have submysed [submitted] myself to translate into English the "Legend of Saints," called "*Legenda aurea*" in Latin; and William, Earl of Arundel, desired me—and promised to take a reasonable quantity of them—and sent me a worshipful gentleman, promising that my said lord should during my life give and grant to me a yearly fee, that is to note, a buck in summer and a doe in winter.—*To Legends of Saints.*

Now then I will finish all these fables with this tale that followeth, which a worshipful priest and a parson told me late: he said that there were dwelling at Oxenford two priests, both Masters of Arts—of whom that one was quick and could put himself forth; and that other was a good simple priest. And so it happened that the master was pert and quick, and was anon promoted to a benefice or twain, and after to prebends, and for to be a dean of a great prince's chapel, supposing and weening that his fellow, the simple priest, should never be promoted, but be always an annual, or, at the most, a parish priest. So after a long time that this worshipful man, this dean, came running into a good parish with five or seven horses, like a prelate, and came into the church of said parish, and found there this good simple man, sometime his fellow, which came and welcomed him lowly. And that other bade him "good morrow, Master John," and took him slightly by the hand, and axed him where he dwelt. And the good man said, "In this parish." "How," said he, are ye here a sole priest, or a parish priest?" "Nay, sir," said he, "for lack of a better, though I am not able nor worthy, I am parson and curate of this parish." And then that other vailed [lowered] his bonnet and said, "Master Parson, I pray you to be not displeased; I had supposed ye had not been beneficed." "But, master," said he, "I pray you what is this benefice worth to you a year?" "Forsooth," said the good simple man, "I wot never; for I make never accompts thereof, how well I have had it four or five years." "And know ye not," said he, "what it is worth?—it should seem a good benefice." "No, forsooth," said he, "but I wot well what it shall be worth to me." "Why," said he, "'what shall it be worth?" "Forsooth," said he, "if I do my true dealing in the cure of my parishes in preaching and teaching, and do my part belonging to my cure, I shall have heaven therefore. And if their souls be lost, or any of them, by my default, I shall be punished therefore. And hereof I am sure." And with that word the rich dean was abashed: and thought he should be the better, and take more heed to his cures and his benefices than he had

done. This was a good answer of a good priest and an honest. And herewith I finish this book, translated and imprinted by me, William Caxton.—*To the "Subtil Histories and Fables of Esop."*

This book is not requisite nor eke convenient for every rude and simple man, which understandeth not of science nor cunning, and for such as have not heard of the noble policy and prudence of the Romans; but for noble, wise, and great lords, gentlemen, and merchants, that have been and daily be occupied in matter touching the public weal: and in especial unto them that been passed their green age, and eke their middle age, called virility, and been approached unto *senectute*, called old and ancient age. Wherein they may see how to suffer and bear the same patiently; and what surety and virtue been in the same, and have also cause to be joyous and glad that they have escaped and passed the manifold perils and doubteous adventures that been in juvente and youth, as in this said book here following ye may more plainly see. —*To Cicero's Treatise on Old Age.*

Forasmuch as this present book is not for a rude uplandish man to labor therein, nor read it, but only for a clerk and a noble gentleman that feeleth and understandeth in faits of arms, in love, and in noble chivalry: therefore, in mean between both I have reduced and translated this said book into our English, not over rude nor curious, but in such terms as shall be understanden, by God's grace, according to my copy. —*To the Æneid of Virgil.*

Which book I had long to fore sold to my said lady, and knew well that the story of it was honest and joyful to all virtuous young noble gentlemen and women, for to read therein as for their pastime. For under correction, in my judgment, histories of noble feats and valiant acts of arms and war, which have been achieved in old time of many noble princes, lords, and knights, are as well for to see and know their

valiantness for to stand in the special grace and love of their ladies, and in likewise for gentle young ladies and demoiselles for to learn to be stedfast and constant in their part to them that they once have promised and agreed to, such as have put their lives oft in jeopardy for to please them to stand in grace, as it is to occupy the ken and study overmuch in books of contemplation.—*To the History of King Blanchardine and Queen Eglantine, his Wife.*

After that I had accomplished and finished divers histories, as well of contemplation as of other historial and worldly acts of great conquerors and princes, and also certain books of ensamples and doctrine, many noble and divers gentlemen of this realm of England came and demanded me many and ofttimes, wherefore that I have not do made and imprint the noble history of the Saint Greal, and of the most renowned Christian king, first and chief of the three best Christian, and worthy, King Arthur, which ought most to be remembered amongst us Englishmen tofore all other Christian kings; for it is notoriously known through the universal world, that there be nine worthy and the best that ever were, that is to wit, three Paynims, three Jews, and three Christian men. As for Paynims, they were tofore the Incarnation of Christ, which were named, the first Hector of Troy, of whom the history is comen both in ballad and in prose, the second Alexander the Great, and the third Julius Cæsar, Emperor of Rome, of whom the histories be well known and had. And as for the three Jews, which also were tofore the incarnation of our Lord, of whom the first was duke Joshua which brought the children of Israel into the land of behest, the second David King of Jerusalem, and the third Judas Machabeus. Of these three the Bible rehearseth all their noble histories and acts. And since the said incarnation have been three noble Christian men, stalled and admitted through the universal world into the number of the nine best and worthy. Of whom was first the noble Arthur, whose noble acts I purpose to write in this present book here following. The second was

Charlemain, or Charles the Great, of whom the history is had in many places, both in French and in English. And the third and last was Godfrey of Boloine, of whose acts and life I made a book unto the excellent prince and king of noble memory, King Edward the Fourth. The said noble gentlemen instantly required me to imprint the history of the said noble king and conqueror King Arthur, and of his knights, with the history of the Saint Greal, and of the death and ending of the said Arthur; affirming that I ought rather to imprint his acts and noble feats, than of Godfrey of Boloine, or any of the other eight, considering that he was a man born within this realm, and king and emperor of the same; and that there be in French divers and many noble volumes of his acts, and also of his knights. To whom I answered that divers men hold opinion that there was no such Arthur, and that all such books as been made of him, be but feigned and fables, because that some chronicles make of him no mention, nor remember him nothing, nor of his knights. Whereto they answered, and one in special said, that in him that should say or think that there was never such a king called Arthur, might well be aretted great folly and blindness. For he said that there were many evidences of the contrary. First ye may see his sepulchre in the monastery of Glastingbury. And also in Policronicon, in the fifth book the sixth chapter, and in the seventh book the twenty-third chapter, where his body was buried, and after found, and translated into the said monastery. Ye shall see also in the history of Bochas in his book *De Casu Principum* part of his noble acts, and also of his fall. Also Galfridus in his British book recounteth his life: and in divers places of England many remembrances be yet of him, and shall remain perpetually, and also of his knights. First in the abbey of Westminster, at St. Edward's shrine, remaineth the print of his seal in red wax closed in beryl, in which is written, *Patricius Arthurus Britannie, Gallie, Germanie, Dacie, Imperator.* Item in the castle of Dover ye may see Gawaine's scull, and Cradok's mantle; at Winchester the Round Table: in other places Launcelot's sword and many

other things. Then all these things considered, there can no man reasonably gainsay but that there was a king of this land named Arthur. For in all places, Christian and heathen, he is reputed and taken for one of the nine worthy, and the first of the three Christian men. And also, he is more spoken of beyond the sea, more books made of his noble acts, than there be in England, as well in Dutch, Italian, Spanish, and Greekish, as in French. And yet of record remain in witness of him in Wales, in the town of Camelot, the great stones and the marvellous works of iron lying under the ground, and royal vaults, which divers now living have seen. Wherefore it is a marvel why he is no more renowned in his own country, save only it accordeth to the Word of God, which saith that no man is accepted for a prophet in his own country. Then all these things aforesaid alleged, I could not well deny but that there was such a noble king named Arthur, and reputed one of the nine worthy, and first and chief of the Christian men. And many noble volumes be made of him and of his noble knights in French, which I have seen and read beyond the sea, which be not had in our maternal tongue. But in Welsh be many, and also in French, and some in English but no where nigh all. Wherefore, such as have late been drawn out briefly into English I have after the simple conning that God hath sent to me, under the favour and correction of all noble lords and gentlemen, enprised to imprint a book of the noble histories of the said King Arthur, and of certain of his knights, after a copy unto me delivered, which copy Sir Thomas Malorye did take out of certain books of French, and reduced it into English. And I, according to my copy, have down set it in print, to the intent that noble men may see and learn the noble acts of chivalry, the gentle and virtuous deeds that some knights used in those days, by which they came to honour, and how they that were vicious were punished and oft put to shame and rebuke; humbly beseeching all noble lords and ladies, with all other estates of what estate or degree they been of, that shall see and read in this said book and work, that they take the good and honest acts in their remembrance, and

to follow the same. Wherein they shall find many joyous and pleasant histories, and noble and renowned acts of humanity, gentleness, and chivalry. For herein may be seen noble chivalry, courtesy, humanity, friendliness, hardiness, love, friendship, cowardice, murder, hate, virtue, and sin. Do after the good and leave the evil, and it shall bring you to good fame and renommee. And for to pass the time this book shall be pleasant to read in, but for to give faith and belief that all is true that is contained herein, ye be at your liberty: but all is written for our doctrine, and for to beware that we fall not to vice nor sin, but to exercise and follow virtue, by the which we may come and attain to good fame and renown in this life, and after this short and transitory life to come unto everlasting bliss in heaven; the which He grant us that reigneth in heaven, the blessed Trinity. Amen.

Then to proceed forth in this said book, the which I direct unto all noble princes, lords and ladies, gentlemen or gentlewomen, that desire to read or hear read of the noble and joyous history of the great conqueror and excellent king, King Arthur, sometime king of this noble realm, then called Britain; I, William Caxton, simple person, present this book following, which I have emprised to imprint: and treateth of the noble acts, feats of arms of chivalry, prowess, hardiness, humanity, love, courtesy, and very gentleness, with many wonderful histories and adventures. And for to understand briefly the content of this volume, I have divided it into XXI Books, and every book chaptered, as hereafter shall by God's grace follow. The First Book shall treat how Uther Pendragon gat the noble conqueror King Arthur, and containeth xxviii chapters. The Second Book treateth of Balin the noble knight, and containeth xix chapters. The Third Book treateth of the marriage of King Arthur to Queen Guenever, with other matters, and containeth xv chapters. The Fourth Book, how Merlin was assotted, and of war made to King Arthur, and containeth xxix chapters. The Fifth Book treateth of the conquest of Lucius the emperor, and containeth xii chapters. The Sixth Book treateth of Sir Launcelot and Sir Lionel,

and marvelous adventures, and containeth xviii chapters. The Seventh Book treateth of a noble knight called Sir Gareth, and named by Sir Kay Beaumains, and containeth xxxvi chapters. The Eighth Book treateth of the birth of Sir Tristram the noble knight, and of his acts, and containeth xli chapters. The Ninth Book treateth of a knight named by Sir Kay Le Cote male taille, and also of Sir Tristram, and containeth xliv chapters. The Tenth Book treateth of Sir Tristram, and other marvelous adventures, and containeth lxxxviii chapters. The Eleventh Book treateth of Sir Launcelot and Sir Galahad, and containeth xiv chapters. The Twelfth Book treateth of Sir Launcelot and his madness, and containeth xiv chapters. The Thirteenth Book treateth how Galahad came first to King Arthur's court, and the quest how the Sangreal was begun, and containeth xx chapters. The Fourteenth Book treateth of the quest of the Sangreal, and containeth x chapters. The Fifteenth Book treateth of Sir Launcelot, and containeth vi chapters. The Sixteenth Book treateth of Sir Bors and Sir Lionel his brother, and containeth xvii chapters. The Seventeenth Book treateth of the Sangreal, and containeth xxiii chapters. The Eighteenth Book treateth of Sir Launcelot and the queen, and containeth xxv chapters. The Nineteenth Book treateth of Queen Guenever and Launcelot, and containeth xiii chapters. The Twentieth Book treateth of the piteous death of Arthur, and containeth xxii chapters. The Twenty-first Book treateth of his last departing, and how Sir Launcelot came to revenge his death, and containeth xiii chapters. The sum is twenty-one books, which contain the sum of five hundred and seven chapters, as more plainly shall follow hereafter.—*To the Book of King Arthur.*

DANIEL.

1562–1619.

Samuel Daniel, the son of a music-master, was born near Taunton, in Somersetshire, in 1562. At seventeen he entered Magdalen College, Oxford, as a commoner, where he remained during the next three years, apparently supported by the Pembroke family. While at Oxford he gave himself principally to the study of history and poetry. After three years he left the university without a degree, and pursued his studies for a time at Wilton, under the patronage and encouragement of the Countess of Pembroke, the famous sister of Sir Philip Sidney. Afterward he became tutor to Lady Anne Clifford, and still later enjoyed the patronage of the Earl of Devonshire and that of the Countess of Bedford. He shared also with Shakespeare the patronage of the Earl of Southampton. At the death of Spenser, in 1599, Daniel became what Campbell calls "voluntary laureate" to Queen Elizabeth. On the accession of James, in 1603, Daniel welcomed him in a congratulatory poem, and became "Gentleman Extraordinary" to that monarch and Master of the Revels. During the reign of Anne he was made one of the Grooms of the Privy Chamber. He died in October, 1619, and was buried at Beckington, where Lady Anne Clifford, then Countess Dowager of Dorset, Pembroke and Montgomery, afterward erected a monument to his memory.

Daniel is said to have enjoyed the friendship of Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Chapman. His character, like his language, was more refined than that of most of his contemporaries. Lowell pronounces him "in all respects a man of finer mold," and adds: "Writing two hundred and fifty years ago, he stands in no need of a glossary. . . I think his 'Musophilus' the finest poem of its kind in the language." The title "the well-languaged Daniel,"

given him by Browne, is sustained by an examination of his works. These are sufficient to fill two respectable volumes. The most important are "A History of the Civil Wars between York and Lancaster" (a poem in eight books, first published in 1604), "Musophilus" (a poem of about one thousand alternately-rhyming lines containing a defense of learning), "The Complaint of Rosamond," and "The Defense of Rhyme." To these must be added a history of England; two dramas, entitled, respectively, "Philotas" and "Cleopatra;" and numerous sonnets, masques, etc.

Although most of our text-books classify Daniel simply as one of a large group of second or third rate poets belonging to the Elizabethan era, the best recent criticism seems to agree with Saintsbury when he says: "There are few poets, not of the first class, to whose merits a stronger consensus of weighty opinion can be produced than that which attests the value of Samuel Daniel's work." The qualities of his style, already partially noted, may be summarized thus:—(1) Dignified moral reflection; (2) exquisite grace of imagery and epithet; (3) purity of diction—freedom from archaisms; (4) smooth, equable verse; (5) tameness. Daniel has been generally criticised for the lack of boldness and force in his poetry. The natural diffidence of his nature and the enervating influences of court favor seem to have clipped wings that might otherwise have soared to greater heights. To quote Lowell again: "His verse does not snatch you away from ordinary associations and hurry you along with it, as is the wont of the higher kinds of poetry, but leaves you, as it were, upon the bank, watching the peaceful current and lulled by its somewhat monotonous murmur. . . It is very fine English, but it is the English of diplomacy somehow; and is never downright this or that, but always has the honor to be, with sentiments of the highest consideration."

SELECTIONS FROM DANIEL.

Musophilus:

CONTAINING

A Defense of Learning.

(To Mr. Fulke Greville.)

I do not here upon this hum'rous stage
Bring my transformèd verse apparelèd
With other's passions, or with others' rage;
With loves, with wounds, with factions furnishèd:
But here present thee, only modelèd
In this poor frame, the form of mine own heart:
Where, to revive myself, my muse is led
With motions of her own, t' act her own part,
Striving to make her own contemnèd art
As fair t' herself as possibly she can;
Lest, seeming of no force, of no desert,
She might repent the course that she began;
And, with these times of dissolution, fall
From goodness, virtue, glory, fame, and all.

Philocosmus. Fond man, Musophilus, that thus dost spend
In an ungainful art thy dearest days,

15. **Musophilus** means a lover of the muses.
15. **Philocosmus** means a lover of the world.

Tiring thy wits, and toiling to no end,
But to attain that idle smoke of praise!
Now when this busy world cannot attend
Th' untimely music of neglected lays;
Other delights than these, other desires,
This wiser profit-seeking age requires.

Musophilus. Friend Philocosmus, I confess indeed
I love this sacred art thou sett'st so light;
And though it never stand my life in stead,
It is enough it gives myself delight,
The whilst my unafflicted mind doth feed
On no unholy thoughts for benefit.
Be it, that my unseasonable song
Come out of time, that fault is in the time;
And I must not do virtue so much wrong,
As love her aught the worse for others' crime:
And yet I find some blessed spir'ts among
That cherish me, and like and grace my rhyme.
Again, that I do more in soul esteem,
Than all the gain of dust the world doth crave:
And if I may attain but to redeem
My name from dissolution and the grave;
I shall have done enough; and better deem
T' have lived to be, than to have died to have.
Short-breath'd mortality would yet extend
That span of life so far forth as it may,
And rob her fate; seek to beguile her end
Of some few ling'ring days of after-stay;
That all this little all might not descend
Into the dark an universal prey;
And give our labors yet this poor delight,
That when our days do end, they are not done;
And though we die, we shall not perish quite,
But live two lives where others have but one.

Philocosmus. Silly desires of self-abusing man,
Striving to gain th' inheritance of air,

That having done the uttermost he can,
Leaves yet perhaps but beggary t' his heir:
All that great purchase of the breath he wan,
Feeds not his race, or makes his house more fair.
And what art thou the better, thus to leave
A multitude of words to small effect;
Which other times may scorn, and so deceive
Thy promis'd name of what thou dost expect?
Besides some vip'rous critic may bereave
Th' opinion of thy worth for some defect;
And get more reputation of his wit,
By but controlling of some word or sense,
Than thou shalt honor for contriving it
With all thy travel, care, and diligence;
B'ing learning now enough to contradict,
And censure others with bold insolence.
Besides, so many so confus'dly sing,
Whose diverse discords have the music marr'd,
And in contempt that mystery doth bring,
That he must sing aloud that will be heard.
And the receiv'd opinion of the thing,
For some unhallow'd string that vilely jarr'd,
Hath so unseason'd now the ears of men,
That who doth touch the tenor of that vein,
Is held but vain; and his unreckon'd pen
The title but of levity doth gain.
A poor light gain, to recompense their toil,
That thought to get eternity the while!
And therefore leave the left and out-worn course
Of unregarded ways, and labor how
To fit the times with what is most in force;
Be new with men's affections that are new:
Strive not to run an idle counter-course,
Out from the scent of humors men allow.
For not discreetly to compose our parts

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3. **Wan,** won. 15. **B'ing,** bringing.

Unto the frame of men (which we must be)
Is to put off ourselves, and make our arts
Rebels to nature and society,
Whereby we come to bury our deserts
In th' obscure grave of singularity.

Musophilus. Do not profane the work of doing well,
Seducèd man, that can'st not look so high
From out that mist of earth, as thou can'st tell
The ways of right which virtue doth descry ;
That overlooks the base contemptibly,
And low laid follies of mortality.
Nor mete out truth and right deserving praise
By that wrong measure of confusion,
The vulgar foot, that never takes his ways
By reason, but by invitation ;
Rolling on with the rest, and never weighs
The course which he should go, but what is gone.
Well were it with mankind, if what the most
Did like were best : but ignorance will live
By others square, as by example lost.
And man to man must th' hand of error give,
That none can fall alone at their own cost ;
And all because men judge not, but believe.
For what poor bounds have they, whom but th' earth bounds ?
What is their end whereto their care attains ;
When the thing got relieves not, but confounds ;
Having but travail to succeed their pains ?
What joy hath he of living, that propounds
Affliction but his end, and grief his gains ?
Gath'ring, encroaching, wresting, joining to,
Destroying, building, decking, furnishing,
Repairing, alt'ring, and so much ado,
To his soul's toil, and body's travailing :
And all this doth he, little knowing who
Fortune ordains to have th' inheriting.

And his fair house rais'd high in envy's eye,
Whose pillars reared (perhaps) on blood and wrong,
The spoils and pillage of iniquity,
Who can assure it to continue long?
If rage spar'd not the walls of piety,
Shall the profanest piles of sin keep strong?
How many proud, aspiring palaces
Have we known made the prey of wrath and pride;
Level'd with th' earth, left to forgetfulness;
Whilst titlers their pretended rights decide,
Or civil tumults, or an orderless
Order; pretending change of some strong side?
Then where is that proud title of thy name,
Written in ice of melting vanity?
Where is thine heir left to possess the fame?
Perhaps not so well as in beggary.
Something may rise, to be beyond the shame
Of vile and unregarded poverty.
Which I must confess; although I often strive
To clothe in the best habit of my skill,
In all the fairest colors I can give.
Yet for all that methinks she looks but ill;
I cannot brook that face, which (dead alive)
Shows a quick body, but a buried will.
Yet oft we see the bars of this restraint
Holds goodness in, which loose wealth would let fly;
And fruitless riches, barrener than want,
Brings forth small worth from idle liberty:
Which when disorders shall again make scant,
It must refetch her state from poverty.
But yet in all this interchange of all,
Virtue, we see, with her fair grace stands fast:
For what high races hath there come to fall
With low disgrace, quite vanishèd and past,
Since Chaucer liv'd; who yet lives, and yet shall,
Though (which I grieve to say) but in his last.
Yet what a time hath he wrested from time,

And won upon the mighty waste of days,
Unto th' immortal honor of our clime,
That by his means came first adorned with bays?
Unto the sacred relics of whose time,
We yet are bound in zeal to offer praise.
  And could our lines, begotten in this age,
Obtain but such a blessed hand of years,
And 'scape the fury of that threatening rage,
Which in confusèd clouds ghastly appears;
Who would not strain his travails to engage,
When such true glory should succeed his cares?
  But whereas he came planted in the spring,
And had the sun before him of respect;
We, set in th' autumn, in the withering
And sullen season of a cold defect,
Must taste those four distastes the times do bring
Upon the fullness of a cloy'd neglect.
  Although the stronger constitutions shall
Wear out th' infection of distemper'd days,
And come with glory to outlive this fall,
Recov'ring of another springing of praise;
Cleared from th' oppressing humors wherewithal
The idle multitude surcharge their lays.
When as (perhaps) the words thou scornest now
May live, the speaking picture of the mind;
The extract of the soul, that labor'd how
To leave the image of herself behind;
Wherein posterity, that love to know,
The just proportion of our spir'ts may find.
  For these lines are the veins, the arteries,
And undecaying life-strings of those hearts,
That still shall pant, and still shall exercise
The motion, spir't and nature both imparts,
And shall with those alive so sympathize,
As nourish'd with their pow'rs, enjoy their parts.
  O blessed letters! that combine in one
All ages past, and make one live with all.

By you we do confer with who are gone,
And the dead-living unto council call:
By you th' unborn shall have communion
Of what we feel, and what doth us befall.
Soul of the world, knowledge, without thee,
What hath the earth that truly glorious is?
Why should our pride make such a stir to be,
To be forgot? What good is like to this,
To do worthy the writing, and to write
Worthy the reading, and the world's delight?
And let th' unnatural and wayward race,
Born of one womb with us, but to our shame;
(That never read t' observe, but to disgrace)
Raise all the tempest of their pow'r, to blame;
That puff of folly never can deface
The work a happy genius took to frame.
Yet why should civil learning seek to wound,
And mangle her own members with despite?
Prodigious wits! that study to confound
The life of wit, to seem to know aright;
As if themselves had fortunately found
Some stand from off the earth beyond our sight;
Whence overlooking all as from above,
Their grace is not to work, but to reprove:
But how came they plac'd in so high degree,
Above the reach and compass of the rest?
Who hath admitted them only to be
Free denizens of skill, to judge the best?
From whom the world as yet could never see
The warrant of their wit soundly express'd.
T' acquaint our times with that perfection
Of high conceit, which only they possess;
That we might have things exquisitely done,
Measur'd with all their strict observances
Such would (I know) scorn a translation
Or bring but others' labors to the press;
Yet oft these monster-breeding mountains will

Bring forth small mice of great expected skill.
Presumption, ever fullest of defects,
Fails in the doing to perform her part;
And I have known proud works, and poor effects,
Of such indeed as do condemn this art:
But let them rest; it ever hath been known,
They others' virtues scorn that doubt their own.
And for the divers disagreeing chords
Of inter-jangling ignorance, that fill
The dainty ears, and leave no room for words,
The worthier minds neglect, or pardon will,
Knowing the best he hath, he frankly 'fords,
And scorns to be a niggard of his skill.
And that the rather since this short-lived race
Being fatally the sons but of one day,
That now with all their power ply 't apace
To hold out with the greatest might they may,
Against confusion that hath all in chase,
To make of all an universal prey.
For now great nature hath laid down at last
That mighty birth wherewith so long she went,
And over-went the times of ages past,
Here to lie in upon our soft content;
Where fruitful she hath multiplied so fast,
That all she hath on these times seem'd t' have spent.
All that which might have many ages grac'd,
Is born in one, to make one cloy'd with all;
Where plenty hath impress'd a deep distaste
Of best and worst, and all in general;
That goodness seems goodnèss to have defac'd,
And virtue hath to virtue giv'n the fall.
For emulation, that proud curse of wit,
Scorning to stay below, or come behind,
Labors upon that narrow top to sit
Of sole perfection in the highest kind.
Envy and wonder looking after it,
Thrust likewise on the self-same bliss to find:

And so long striving till they can no more,
Do stuff the place, or others' hopes shut out;
Who doubting to o'ertake those gone before,
Give up their care, and cast no more about;
And so in scorn leave all as sore-possess'd,
And will be none, where they may not be best.
Ev'n like some empty creek, that long hath lain
Left or neglected of the river by,
Whose searching sides pleas'd with a wand'ring vein,
Finding some little way that close did lie,
Steal in at first; then other streams again
Second the first, then more than all supply;
Till all the mighty main hath born at last
The glory of his chiefest pow'r that way,
Plying this new-found pleasant room so fast,
Till all be full, and all be at a stay;
And then about, and back again doth cast,
Leaving that full to fall another way:
So fares this hum'rous world that evermore
Wrapp'd with the current of a present course,
Runs into that which lay contemned before;
Then, glutted, leaves the same, and falls t' a worse.
Now zeal holds all, no life but to adore;
Then cold in spir't, and faith is of no force.
Strait all that holy was unhallow'd lies,
The scatter'd carcasses of ruin'd vows;
Then truth is false, and now hath blindness eyes;
Then zeal trusts all, now scarcely what it knows:
That evermore to foolish or to wise,
It fatal is to be seduc'd with shows,
Sacred religion! mother of form and fear!
How gorgeously sometimes dost thou sit deck'd?
What pompous vestures do we make thee wear,
What stately piles we prodigal erect?
How sweet perfum'd thou art; how shining clear?
How solemnly observed; with what respect?
Another time all plain, all quite threadbare;

Thou must have all within, and nought without;
Sit poorly without light, disrob'd: no care
Of outward grace, t' amuse the poor devout;
Pow'rless, unfollow'd: scarcely men can spare
The necessary rites to set thee out.
Either truth, goodness, virtue are not still
The self-same which they are, and always one,
But alter to the project of our will;
Or we our actions make them wait upon,
Putting them in the liv'ry of our skill,
And cast them off again when we have done.
You, mighty lords that with respected grace
Do at the stern of fair example stand,
And all the body of this populace
Guide with the turning of your hand;
Keep a right course; bear up from all disgrace;
Observe the point of glory to our land:
Hold up disgracèd knowledge from the ground;
Keep virtue in request; give worth her due:
Let not neglect with barb'rous means confound
So fair a good, to bring in night anew:
Be not, O be not accessary found
Unto her death, that must give life to you.
Where will you have your virtuous name safe laid,
In gorgeous tombs, in sacred cells secure?
Do you not see those prostrate heaps betray'd
Your father's bones, and could not keep them sure?
And will you trust deceitful stones fair laid
And think they will be to your honor truer?
No, no; unsparing time will proudly send
A warrant unto wrath, that with one frown
Will all these mock'ries of vain glory rend,
And make them (as before) ungrac'd, unknown;
Poor idle honors, that can ill defend
Your memories, that cannot keep their own.
And whereto serve that wondrous trophy now
That on the goodly plain near Walton stands?

That huge dumb heap, that cannot tell us how,
Nor what, nor whence it is; nor with whose hands,
Nor for whose glory—it was set to show,
How much our pride mocks that of other lands.
Whereon, when as the gazing passenger
Had greedy look'd with admiration;
And fain would know his birth, and what he were:
How there erected; and how long agone:
Inquires and asks his fellow-traveler
What he had heard, and his opinion:
And he knows nothing. Then he turns again,
And looks and sighs; and then admires afresh,
And in himself with sorrow doth complain
The misery of dark forgetfulness;
Angry with time that nothing should remain,
Our greatest wonders wonder to express.
Then ignorance, with fabulous discourse,
Robbing fair art and cunning of their right,
Tells how those stones were by the devil's force
From Afric brought to Ireland in a night;
And thence to Britanny, by magic course,
From giant's hands redeem'd by Merlin's flight.
And then near Ambri placed, in memory
Of all those noble Britons murdered there,
By Hengist and his Saxon treachery,
Coming to parley in peace at unaware.
With this old legend then credulity
Holds her content, and closes up her care.
But is antiquity so great a liar?
Or do her younger sons her age abuse;
See'ng after-comers still so apt t' admire
The grave authority that she doth use
That rev'rence and respect dare not require
Proof of her deeds, or once her words refuse?
Yet wrong they did us, to presume so far
Upon our easy credit and delight;
For once found false, they straight became to mar

Our faith, and their own reputation quite ;
That now her truths hardly believèd are ;
And though she avouch the right, she scarce hath right.
And as for thee, thou huge and mighty frame
That stands corrupted so with time's despite,
And giv'st false evidence against their fame
That set thee there to testify their right ;
And art become a traitor to their name,
That trusted thee with all the best they might ;
Thou shalt stand still belied and slanderèd,
The only gazing stock of ignorance,
And by thy guile the wise admonishèd,
Shall never more desire such hopes t' advance,
Nor trust their living glory with the dead
That cannot speak, but leave their fame to chance.
Consid'ring in how small a room do lie,
And yet lie safe (as fresh as if alive)
All those great worthies of antiquity,
Which long fore-liv'd thee, and shall long survive ;
Who stronger tombs found for eternity,
Than could the pow'rs of all the earth contrive.
Where they remain these trifles to upbraid,
Out of the reach of spoil, and way of rage ;
Though time with all his pow'r of years hath laid
Long batt'ry, back'd with undermining age ;
Yet they make head only with their own aid,
And war with his all-conqu'ring forces wage ;
Pleading the heav'n's prescription to be free,
And t' have a grant t' endure as long as he.
Philocosmus. Behold how ev'ry man, drawn with delight
Of what he does, flatters him in his way ;
Striving to make his course seem only right,
Doth his own rest, and his own thoughts betray :
Imagination bringing bravely dight
Her pleasing images in best array,
With flatt'ring glasses that must show him fair,

And others foul ; his skill and wit the best,
Others seduc'd, deceiv'd and wrong in their ;
His knowledge right, all ignorance the rest ;
Not seeing how these minions in the air
Present a face of things falsely express'd,
And that the glimm'ring of these errors shown,
Are but a light to let him see his own.
Alas, poor fame ! in what a narrow room,
As an incagéd parrot, art thou pent
Here amongst us ; where ev'n as good be dumb
As speak, and to be heard with no attent ?
How can you promise of the time to come,
When as the present are so negligent ?
Is this the walk of all your wide renown !
This little point, this scarce discernèd isle !
Thrust from the world, with whom our speech, unknown,
Made never any traffic of our style.
And in this all, where all this care is shown
T' enchant your fame to last so long a while.
And for that happier tongues have won so much,
Think you to make your barb'rous language such ?
Poor narrow limits for so mighty pains,
That cannot promise any foreign vent !
And yet if here, too, all your wondrous veins
Were generally known, it might content.
But lo ! how many reads not, or disdains
The labor of the chief and excellent ?
How many thousands never heard the name
Of Sidney, or of Spencer, or their books ?
And yet brave fellows, and presume of fame ;
And seem to bear down all the world with looks :
What then shall they expect of meaner frame,
On whose endeavors few or none scarce looks ?
Do you not see these pamphlets, libels, rhymes,
These strange confusèd tumults of the mind,

---

30. **Presume,** confident. 34. **Libels,** little books.

Are grown to be the sickness of these times,
The great disease inflicted on mankind?
Your virtues, by your follies made your crimes,
Have issue with your indiscretion join'd.
Schools, arts, professions, all in so great store,
Pass the proportion of the present state;
Where being as great a number as before,
And fewer rooms them to accommodate;
It cannot be, but they must throng the more,
And kick and thrust, and shoulder with debate.
  For when the greater wits cannot attain
Th' expected good which they account their right,
And yet perceive others to reap that gain
Of far inferior virtues in their fight;
They present, with the sharp of envy, strain
To wound them with reproaches and despite;
And for these cannot have as well as they,
They scorn their faith should deign to look that way.
Hence discontented sects and schisms arise;
Hence interwounding controversies spring,
That feed the simple, and offend the wise,
Who know the consequence of caviling
Disgrace, that these to others do devise:
Contempt and scorn on all in th' end doth bring,
Like scolding wives, reck'ning each other's fault,
Make standers-by imagine both are naught.
  For when to these rare dainties time admits
All comers, all complexions, all that will;
Where none should be let in but choicest wits,
Whose mild discretion could comport with skill:
For when the place their humor neither fits,
Nor they the place; who can expect but ill?
For being unapt for what they took in hand,
And for aught else whereto they shall b' address'd,
They ev'n become th' incumbrance of the land,

---

15. **Present,** at once.

As out of rank, disord'ring all the rest :
This grace of theirs to seem to understand,
Mars all their grace, to do without their rest.
Men find that action is another thing,
Than what they in discoursing papers read :
The world's affairs require in managing
More arts than those wherein you clerks proceed ;
Whilst tim'rous knowledge stands considering,
Audacious ignorance hath done the deed.
For who knows most, the more he knows to doubt ;
The least discourse is commonly most stout.
This sweet-enchanting knowledge turns you clean
Out from the fields of natural delight,
And makes you hide, unwilling to be seen
In th' open concourse of a public sight :
This skill wherewith you have so cunning been,
Unsinews all your pow'rs, unmans you quite.
Public soci'ty, and commèrce of men,
Require another grace, another port :
This eloquence, these rhymes, these phrases then
Begot in shades, do serve us in no sort ;
The unmaterial swelling of your pen,
Touch not the spir't that action doth import.
A manly style fitted to manly ears,
Best 'grees with wit ; not that which goes so gay,
And commonly the gaudy liv'ry wears
Of nice corruptions, which the times do sway ;
And waits on th' humor of his pulse, that bears
His passions set to such a pleasing key.
Such dainties serve only for stomachs weak ;
For men do foulest, when they finest speak.
Yet do I not dislike, that in some wise
Be sung the great heroical deserts
Of brave renownèd spir'ts ; whose exercise
Of worthy deeds may call up others' hearts,
And serve a model for posterities,
To fashion them fit for like glorious parts ;

But so that all our spir'ts may tend hereto,
To make it not our grace to say, but do.
Musophilus. Much thou hast said, and willingly I hear,
As one that am not so possess'd with love
Of what I do; but that I rather bear
An ear to learn, than a tongue to disprove:
I know men must, as carried in their sphere,
According to their proper motions move.
And that course likes them best, which they are on;
Yet truth hath certain bounds, but falsehood none.
I do confess our limits are but small,
Compar'd with all the whole vast earth beside;
All which again rated to that Great All,
Is likewise as a point, scarcely descried:
So that in these respects we may this call
A point but of a point, where we abide.
But if we shall descend from that high stand
Of overlooking contemplation,
And cast our thoughts but to, and not beyond
This spacious circuit which we tread upon;
We then may estimate our mighty land
A world within a world, standing alone.
Where, if our fame confin'd cannot get out,
What shall we imagine it is pen'd,
That hath so great a world to walk about;
Whose bounds with her reports have both one end?
Why shall we not rather esteem her stout,
That farther than her own scorn to extend?
Where being so large a room both to do well,
And eke to hear th' applause of things well done,
That farther if men shall our virtues tell,
We have more mouths, but not more merit won;
It doth not greater make that which is laud'ble,
The flame is bigger blown, the fire all one.
And for the few that only lend their ear,

---

21. **What,** why.

That few is all the world ; which with a few
Do ever live and move, and work, and stir.
This is the heart doth feel, and only know
The rest of all that only bodies bear,
Roll up and down, and fill but up the row.
  And serves as others' members, not their own,
The instruments of those that do direct.
Then what disgrace is this, not to be known
To those know not to give themselves respect?
And though they swell with pomp of folly blown,
They live ungrac'd, and die but in neglect.
  And for my part, if only one allow
The care my lab'ring spirits take in this ;
He is to me a the'tre large enow,
And his applause only sufficient is :
All my respect is bent but to his brow ;
That is my All, and all I am is his.
  And if some worthy spir'ts be pleasèd too,
It shall more comfort breed, but not more will.
But what if none ? it cannot yet undo
The love I bear into this holy skill.
This is the thing that I was born to do :
This is my scene ; this part must I fulfill.
  Let those that know not breath esteem of wind,
And set t' a vulgar air their servile song ;
Rating their goodness by the praise they find,
Making their worth on others' fits belong ;
As virtue were the hireling of the mind,
And could not live if fame had ne'er a tongue :
  Hath that all-knowing pow'r, that holds within
The goodly prospective of all this frame,
(Where whatsoever is, or what hath been,
Reflects a certain image of the same)
No inward pleasures to delight her in,
But she must gad to seek an alms of fame?

---

31. **Prospective,** view.

Must she, like to a wanton courtesan,
Open her breasts for show, to win her praise ;
And blaze her fair bright beauty unto man,
As if she were enamor'd of his ways ;
And knew not weakness, nor could rightly scan
To what defects his hum'rous breath obeys ?
She that can tell how proud ambition
Is but a beggar, and hath nought at all,
But what is giv'n of mere devotion :
For which, how much it sweats ! How much its thrall !
What toil it takes ! And yet when all is done,
The ends in expectation never fall.
Shall she join hands with such a servile mate,
And prostrate her fair body, to commit
Folly with earth ; and to defile that state
Of clearness, for so gross a benefit ?
Having reward dwelling within her gate,
And glory of her own to furnish it.
Herself a recompense sufficient
Unto herself, to give her own content.
Is't not enough that she hath rais'd so high
Those that be hers ; that they may sit and see
The earth below them, and this All to lie
Under their view ? taking the true degree
Of the just height of swol'n mortality
Right as it is, not as it seems to be.
And undeceivèd with the parallax
Of a mistaking eye of passion, know
By these mask'd outsides what the inward lacks ;
Meas'ring man by himself, not by his show :
Wond'ring not at their rich and golden backs,
That have poor minds, and little else to show.
Nor taking that for them, which well they see
Is not of them but rather is their load :
The lies of fortune, wherewithal men be
Deemèd within, when they be all abroad ;

36. **Deemèd,** judged.

Whose ground, whose grass, whose earth have cap and
knee,
Which they suppose is on themselves bestow'd ;
And think (like Isis' ass) all honors are
Giv'n unto them alone ; the which are done
Unto the painted idol which they bear,
That only makes them to be gazèd on.
For take away their pack, and show them bare,
And see what beast this honor rides upon.
Hath knowledge lent to hers the privy key,
To let them in unto the highest stage
Of causes, secrets, counsels ; to survey
The wits of men, their heats, their colds, their rage ;
That build, destroy, praise, hate, say, and gainsay,
Believe and unbelieve, all in one age ?
And shall we trust goodness, as it proceeds
From that unconstant mouth ; which with one breath
Will make it bad again, unless it feeds
The present humor that it favoreth ?
Shall we esteem, and reckon how it heeds
Our works, that his own vows unhalloweth ?
Then whereto serves it to have been enlarged
With this free manumission of the mind,
If for all that we still continue charg'd
With those discover'd errors which we find ?
As if our knowledge only were discharg'd,
Yet we ourselves staid in a servile kind,
That virtue must be out of countenance,
If this gross spir't, or that weak shallow brain,
Or this nice wit, or that distemperance,
Neglect, distaste, uncomprehend, disdain :
When such sick eyes can never cast a glance,
But through the colors of their proper stain.
Though I must needs confess, the small respect
That these great seeming-best of men do give
(Whose brow begets th' inferior sort's neglect)
Might move the weak irresolute to grieve ;

But stronger see how justly this defect
Hath overtook the times wherein we live.
That learning needs must run the common fate
Of all things else, thrust on by her own weight,
Comporting not herself in her estate,
Under this burden of a self-conceit:
Our own dissentious hands op'ning the gate
Unto contempt, that on our quarrels wait,
Discover'd have our inward government;
And led in hard opinion to disgrace
The general, for some weak impotent,
That bear out their disease with a stol'n face;
Who (silly fools!) the more wit they have spent,
The less they show'd, not bett'ring their bad case.
And see how soon this rolling world can take
Advantage for her dissolution!
Fain to get loose from this withholding stake
Of civil science and discretion;
How glad it would run wild, that it might make
One formless form of one confusion!
Like tyrant Ottoman's blindfolded state,
Which must know nothing more, but to obey:
For this seeks greedy ignorance t' abate
Our number, order, living, form, and sway;
For this it practices to dissipate
Th' unshelter'd troops, till all be made away.
For since our father's sins pull'd first to ground
The pale of this dissever'd dignity,
And overthrew that holy rev'rend bound,
That parted learning and the laity,
And laid all flat in common; to confound
The honor and respect of piety:
It did so much envile the estimate
Of th' open'd and invulgar'd mysteries,
Which now reduc'd unto the basest rate,
Must wait upon the Norman subtleties;
Who being mounted up into their state,

Do best with wrangling rudeness sympathize.
And yet, though now set quite behind the train
Of vulgar sway (and light of pow'r weigh'd light),
Yet would this giddy innovation fain
Down with it lower, to abase it quite:
And those poor remnants that do yet remain
The spoilèd marks of their divided right,
They wholly would deface, to leave no face
Of reverend distinction and degree;
As if they weigh'd no difference in this case,
Betwixt religion's age and infancy:
Where th' one must creep, the other stand with grace,
Lest turn'd t' a child, it overturnèd be.
Though to pull back th' onrunning state of things,
(Gath'ring corruption, as it gathers days)
Unto the form of their first orderings,
Is the best means that dissolution stays;
And to go forward, backward right men brings,
T' observe the line from whence they took their ways.
Yet being once gone wide, and the right way
Not level to the times' condition;
To alter course may bring men more astray;
And leaving what was known, to light on none:
Since ev'ry change, the rev'rence doth decay,
Of that which alway should continue one.
For this is that close kept palladium,
Which once remov'd brings ruin evermore;
This stirr'd, makes men fore-settled, to become
Curious to know what was believed before:
Whilst faith disputes, that usèd to be dumb;
And more men strive to talk, than to adore.
For never headstrong reformation will
Rest, till to th' extreme opposite it run,
And overrun the mean distrusted still;
As being too near of kin to that men shun;
For good and bad, and all must be one ill,
When once there is another truth begun.

So hard it is an even hand to bear,
In temp'ring with such maladies as these;
Lest that our forward passions launch too near,
And make the cure prove worse than the disease;
For with the worst we will not spare the best,
Because it grows with that which doth displease.
And faults are easier look'd in, than redress'd:
Men running with such eager violence,
At the first view of errors fresh in quest;
As they, to rid an inconvenience,
Stick not to raise a mischief in the stead,
Which after mocks their weak improvidence;
And therefore do not make your own sides bleed,
To prick at others: you that would amend
By pulling down, and think you can proceed,
By going back unto the farther end:
Let stand that little covert left behind,
Whereon your succors and respects depend;
And bring not down the prizes of the mind,
With under-rating of yourselves so base:
You that the mighties' doors do crouching find,
To sell yourselves to buy a little grace;
Or wait whole months to outbid Simony,
For that which being got, is not your place.
For if it were, what needed you to buy,
What was your due? your thirsting shows your shift,
And little worth, that seeks injuriously
A worthier from his lawful room to lift.
We cannot say, that you were then preferr'd;
But that your money was, or some worse gift.
O scatt'ring gath'rers! that without regard
Of times to come, will (to be made) undo;
As if you were the last of men, prepar'd
To bury in your graves all other too.
Dare you profane that holy portion,
Which never sacrilegious hand durst do?
Did form-establishing devotion,

To maintain a respective reverence,
Extend her bountiful provision
With such a charitable providence,
For your deforming hands to dissipate,
And make God's due your impious expense?
No marvel then, though th' over-pester'd state
Want room for goodness; if our little hold
Be lessen'd unto such a narrow rate,
That rev'rence cannot fit; fit as it should.
And yet what need we thus for rooms complain?
That shall not want void rooms, if this course hold;
And more than will be fill'd—for who will strain
To get an empty title, to betray
His hopes; and travel for an honor vain,
And gain a port, without support or stay?
What need hath envy to malign their state,
That will themselves (so kind!) give it away?
This makes indeed our number pass the rate
Of our provisions; which, if dealt aright,
Would yield sufficient room t' accommodate,
More than we have in places requisite.
The ill-disposing only doth us set
In disarray, and out of order quite.
Whilst others gifts then of the mind shall get,
Under our colors, that which is our dues.
And to our travels, art neither benefit,
Nor grace, nor honor, nor respect accrues:
The sickness of the state's soul (learning) then
The body's great distemp'rature ensues.
For if that learning's rooms to learned men
Were as their heritage distributed,
All this disorder'd thrust would cease. For when
The fit were called; th' unworthy frustrated:
These would be 'shamed to seek; those to b' unsought;
And stay'ng their turn, were sure they should be sped.
Then would our drooping acadèmies, brought
Again in heart, regain that rev'rend hand

Of lost opinion ; and no more be thought
Th' unnecessary furnish of the land,
Nor (discouragèd with their small esteem)
Confus'd, irresolute and wav'ring stand :
Caring not to become profound ; but seem
Contented with a superficial skill,
Which for a slight reward enough they deem
When th' one succeeds as well as th' other will :
See'ng shorter ways lead sooner to their end,
And others' longer travels thrive so ill.
  Then would they only labor to extend
Their now unsearching spir't beyond these bounds
Of others' pow'rs, wherein they must be penned ;
As if there were besides no other grounds :
And set their bold *plus ultra* far without
The pillars of those axioms age propounds.
Discov'ring daily more and more about,
In that immense and boundless ocean
Of nature's riches, never yet found out,
Nor fore-clos'd with the wit of any man.
So far beyond the ordinary course,
That other unindustrious ages ran ;
That these more curious times they might divorce
From the opinion they are link'd unto,
Of our disable and unactive force ;
To show true knowledge can both speak and do :
Arm'd for the sharp which in these days they find,
With all provisions that belong thereto :
  That their experience may not come behind
The times' conceit ; but leading in their place,
May make men see the weapons of the mind
Are states' best strengths, and kingdoms' chiefest grace;
And rooms of charge, charg'd full with worth and praise,
Makes majesty appear with her full face ;
Shining with all her beams, with all her rays ;
Unscanted of her parts, unshadowèd

In any darken'd point: which still bewrays
The weap'n of pow'r, when pow'r's unfurnishèd,
And hath not all those entire compliments,
Wherewith the state should for her state be sped.
And though the fortune of some age consents
Unto a thousand errors grossly wrought,
Which, flourish'd over with their fair events,
Have pass'd for current, and good courses thought;
The least whereof, in other times, again
Most dang'rous inconveniences have brought;
Whilst to the times, not to men's wits, pertain
The good successes of ill-manag'd deeds;
Though th' ignorant deceiv'd of colors vain,
Miss of the causes whence this luck proceeds.
Foreign defects giving home-faults the way,
Make ev'n that weakness sometimes well succeeds.
I grant, that some unletter'd practic may
(Leaving beyond the Alps, faith and respect
To God and man) with impious cunning sway
The courses fore-begun with like effect,
And without stop maintain the turning-on,
And have his errors deemed without defect.
But when some pow'rful opposition
Shall, with a sound encount'ring shock, disjoint
The sore-contrivèd frame; and thereupon
Th' experience of the present disappoint;
And other stirring spir'ts, and other hearts
Built huge for action, meeting in a point;
Shall drive the world to summon all their arts,
And all too little for so real might,
When no advantages of weaker parts
Shall bear out shallow counsels from the light;
And this sense-op'ning action (which doth hate
Unmanly craft) shall look to have her right.
Who then holds up the glory of the state;

17. **Practic**, man of affairs.

(Which letter'd arms, and armèd letters won)
Who shall be fittest to negotiate,
Contemn'd Justinian, or else Littleton?
When it shall not be held wisdom to be
Privately made, and publicly undone:
But sound designs, that judgment shall decree
Out of a true discern of the clear ways
That lie direct, with safe-going equity;
Embroiling not their own, and others' days.
Extending forth their providence beyond
The circuit of their own particular;
That ev'n th' ignorant may understand,
How that deceit is but a caviller,
And true unto itself can never stand,
But still must with her own conclusions war.
* * * * * * *
Pow'r above pow'rs! O heav'nly eloquence!
That with the strong rein of commanding words,
Dost manage, guide, and master th' eminence
Of men's affections, more than all their swords!
Shall we not offer to thy excellence,
The richest treasure that our wit affords?
Thou that canst do much more with one poor pen,
Than all the pow'rs of princes can effect;
And draw, divert, dispose, and fashion men,
Better than force or rigor can direct!
Should we this ornament of glory then,
As th' unmaterial fruits of shades neglect?
Or should we careless come behind the rest
In pow'r of words, that go before in worth;
When as our accent's equal to the best,
Is able greater wonders to bring forth?
When all that ever hotter spir'ts express'd,
Comes better'd by the patience of the north.
And who (in time) knows whither we may vent

---

3. **Littleton,** a contemporary jurist.

The treasure of our tongue? To what strange shores,
This gain of our best glory shall be sent,
T' enrich unknowing nations with our stores?
What worlds in th' yet unformèd occidènt,
May come refin'd with th' accents that are ours?
Or who can tell for what great work in hand
The greatness of our style is now ordain'd?
What pow'rs it shall bring in, what spir'ts command?
What thoughts let out; what humors keep restrain'd?
What mischief it may pow'rfully withstand;
And what fair ends may thereby be attain'd?
And as for po'sy (mother of this force!)
That breeds, brings forth, and nourishes this might;
Teaching it in a loose, yet measur'd course,
With comely notions how to go upright;
And fost'ring it with bountiful discourse,
Adorns it thus in fashions of delight.
What should I say?—Since it is well approv'd
The speech of heav'n, with whom they have commèrce;
That only seem out of themselves remov'd,
And do with more than human skills converse:
Those numbers wherewith heav'n and earth are mov'd,
Show weakness speaks in prose, but pow'r in verse.
Wherein thou likewise seemest to allow,
That th' acts of worthy men should be preserv'd,
As in the holiest tombs we can bestow
Upon their glory that have well deserv'd;
Wherein thou dost no other virtue show,
Than what most barb'rous countries have observed:
When all the happiest nations hitherto,
Did with no lesser glory speak, than do.
Now to what else thy malice shall object,
For schools, and arts, and their necessity;
When from my lord, whose judgment must direct,
And form and fashion my ability,
I shall have got more strength; thou shalt expect,
Out of my better leisure, my reply.

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